

PHTHALATES AND BISPHENOLS IN TANZANIA - SUMMARY

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AGENDA
For Environment and Responsible Development



for a healthy toxics-free future

Country situation reports on phthalates and bisphenols

Phthalates and Bisphenols in Tanzania

Executive summary

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Introduction

AGENDA for Environment and Responsible Development (AGENDA) is among the NGOs that are participating in country studies to identify the country situation on Phthalates and Bisphenols. The studies were launched by IPEN in July, 2025.

This report is therefore presenting the findings of the study and related recommendations for Tanzania. The study was mainly carried out through consultations and literature review.

The key findings are (1) Tanzania has regulatory instruments and strategies relevant to chemical management. The key ones are: The Environmental Management (Prohibition of Plastic Carrier Bags and Plastic Bottle Cap Seals) Regulations, 2022; The Industrial and Consumer Chemicals Regulations, 2020; The National Strategy for Sound Management of Chemicals and Hazardous Waste 2020–2025; and The National Environmental Policy 2021 but none that explicitly and comprehensively regulate phthalates or bisphenols; (2) Tanzania-specific empirical evidence is limited to a small number of environmental phthalate studies (coastal monitoring and phthalate migration from PET bottles studies) and institutional responses; (3) There are no published national biomonitoring studies or documented human health outcome studies linking phthalates or bisphenols to reproductive or hormonal outcomes in Tanzanian populations; (4) Government agencies acknowledge gaps and willingness to collaborate, despite the fact that data sharing and inter-agency coordination remain as constraints.

All claims in this report are drawn from project documents, stakeholder questionnaire responses, and the project guidance documents; where information was unavailable it is explicitly recorded as missing.

Methods

The methods used include: Literature search, stakeholder consultations, document review, and trade and market scoping.

Through online searching, relevant publications, databases, and national reports were identified. More data on trade and market were also identified. This also supported the identification of relevant stakeholders for the study.

The exercise was followed by designing and distributing questionnaires to the stakeholders and allowing them time to respond. This was coupled with physical consultations where appropriate. The consultations were mainly at the policy and regulatory levels.

In addition, the study team reviewed information available from project guidance documents, materials that were searched and others that were available during consultations (face-to-face, emails and phone calls).

Production and use of phthalates and bisphenol in Tanzania

Plastics produced

Data on how much plastics is produced in Tanzania could not be found. It is also reported that Tanzania does not produce primary plastic. The existing data involves plastic waste generation which in 2018 was 315,000 tonnes, of which recycling rate was 4%.

Imports

Tanzania imported plastics worth approximately USD 520 million in 2023, according to <https://www.reportlinker.com/clp/country/6347/726255> and [the import market](#) is projected to reach USD 580 million by 2028, with an average annual growth rate of 1.7%. [Imports](#) are dominated by primary forms (resins), packaging materials, household goods, construction materials, and miscellaneous articles (HS 3926).

Exports

[Tanzania exported plastics](#) worth USD 45.11 million in 2024. [The export market](#) is projected to reach USD 210 million by 2028, up from nearly USD 170 million in 2023 (CAGR 3.7%).

[Exports](#) are primarily to neighboring East African countries and focus on packaging materials, household goods, and construction products. Tanzania imports significantly more plastics than it exports.

Phthalates and Bisphenols

Phthalates are imported in Tanzania, but it is hard to know the exact amount per year, the data identified that:

[Exim Trade Data](#) lists numerous shipments of dioctyl orthophthalates (DOP) (HS 291732), from China, Hongkong, Malaysia and South Korea to Tanzania, including to the Dar es Salaam customs service centre, with detailed shipment records from 2023 and 2024.

[Volza](#) reports 300 import shipments of DOP (HS 291732) to Tanzania, with China, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Vietnam as major origins, and Dar es Salaam as a key port of entry.

[World Bank WITS](#) data for 2023 shows Tanzania imported \$2.82 million worth of DOP (HS 291732), totaling over 3 million kg, [primarily from China](#), Korea, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Hong Kong.

[Tanzania reports trade data](#) only at the 6-digit HS level, with no public access to 8- or 10-digit records. This limits transparency and prevents precise identification of DBP, DiBP, and other phthalates (are likely imported under the same code, but detailed disaggregated data is could not be found).

Bisphenols

No importation or exportation data of Bisphenols (Under EAC CET 2022, HS 2907.23.00) were found but market sources confirm its presence in the Tanzania supply chain.

Regulatory controls on phthalates and/or bisphenols in Tanzania

Tanzania does not have specific national, explicit, comprehensive regulations limiting phthalates or bisphenols by chemical group across the product lifecycle. However, it has chemical management frameworks and instruments that regulate chemicals and plastics, where some of them are: [The Environmental Management \(Prohibition of Plastic Carrier Bags\) Regulations, 2019](#); [The Environmental Management \(Prohibition of Plastic Carrier Bags and Plastic Bottle Cap Seals\), Regulations 2022](#). Others are The Industrial and Consumer Chemicals (Management and Control) Regulations, 2020; The National Strategy for Sound Management of Chemicals and Hazardous Waste 2020–2025; and The National Environmental Policy, 2021. However, the study could not identify any mandatory national traceability requirements.

Impacts of phthalates/bisphenols in Tanzania

There are limited studies that have been carried out in Tanzania, which focus on phthalates. Some of these are:

[Coastal contamination study](#) which detected Diisobutyl phthalate (DiBP), Dibutyl phthalate (DBP), and Di(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate (DEHP) in seawater, sediments, and shellfish (*Anadara antiquata*) collected from sites including Dar es Salaam, Kunduchi, and Bagamoyo. Urban sites like Dar es Salaam showed the highest concentrations, underscoring the link between phthalate pollution and industrial/urban activity. The findings highlight risks of marine ecosystem contamination and potential bioaccumulation in seafood consumed by local communities. Moreover, the study did not provide gender specific or vulnerable groups data.

A study conducted in Mwanza City analyzed drinking water bottled in PET and polycarbonate (PC) containers under different storage conditions. The analysis detected Dimethyl phthalate (DMP) as the most predominant contaminant, with concentrations ranging from 0.035 µg/mL to 0.235 µg/mL. Migration increased by 2.6 times under outdoor storage and 2.7 times under room temperature storage between less than two weeks after production and six months of storage. DEHP was detected only at levels below the limit of detection (LOD). These results confirm a direct consumer exposure pathway to phthalates through bottled drinking water in Tanzania.

These studies confirm the presence of phthalates in Tanzania's environment and consumer products.

However, the study could not find any studies on biomonitoring (urine, blood, breastmilk) or epidemiological studies identified linking phthalates/bisphenols to reproductive or hormonal disorders in human populations.

National endeavors to phase out bisphenols and/or phthalates

The Vice President's Office - Division of Environment (VPO-DoE), is the Convention's National Focal Point for Plastic issues. From the study, no specific initiatives aiming at phasing out phthalates and bisphenols were identified. However, the Tanzania Medicines and Medical Devices Authority (TMDA) noted that they regulate phthalates and bisphenols through its Compendium of Guidelines for Marketing Authorization of Medical Devices, Diagnostics and Laboratory Equipment (2024), which requires disclosure, labeling, and risk assessment of materials that are carcinogenic, mutagenic, toxic, or sensitizing. This control does not address specific groups of phthalates or bisphenols.

This study has noted main challenges such as: Limited data, limited data transparency, regulatory gaps, limited laboratory infrastructure and low public awareness.

The recommendations include: Need for enhanced efforts on evidence generation, capacity enhancement to enforcers, improved institutional and regional collaboration in phasing out phthalates and bisphenols, and enhanced consumer awareness.